



Agricultural Safety Fact Sheet



Emergency Preparedness for Farmworkers

Farms, like most workplaces, face unexpected emergencies and disasters. Agricultural emergencies and disasters can be natural or man-made. To help lessen the impact of these events, employers and supervisors should develop and exercise an emergency action plan that prepares workers to react to and handle emergencies and disasters before they occur.

What is an Emergency Action Plan (EAP)?

An emergency action plan identifies and organizes employer and worker responsibilities in preparation for and when responding to a workplace emergency or disaster. Having a plan with the employer's support and commitment and workers' participation is key to an orderly evacuation and quick response. Developing and implementing an EAP can lessen confusion, decrease injuries, and limit destruction of property during and after a disaster or other emergency.

Agricultural Emergencies

Natural:

- tornadoes
- hurricanes
- wildfires
- floods
- severe winter storms
- severe dust storms
- lightning strikes
- earthquakes

Man-made:

- wildfires
- explosions or fires
- animal handling incidents
- grain entrapments
- power failures
- rotating and moving equipment incidents (Power take-off shafts, screw conveyors/augers)
- chemical releases or spills
- amputations
- vehicle incidents (turnovers, rollovers)
- workplace violence
- accidental poisoning

How to Prepare an Emergency Action Plan

A well-documented EAP should ensure that emergency response procedures are established for before, during, and after an emergency. The plan should be broad enough to address all types of emergencies or disasters that could possibly occur on the farm. For smaller organizations, the EAP does not need to be written and may be communicated orally. Nevertheless, it is always a good practice to have a written emergency action plan. The best EAPs are customized for your specific farm operations and require time, thought and planning. Include workers and family members in the emergency preparedness planning process to help identify emergency or disaster situations that can impact the farm. The EAP should be revised once shortcomings have become known, and reviewed at least annually. The employer should review the EAP with each worker when:

- A new worker is hired
- The plan is developed
- The worker's workplace responsibilities or designated actions under the plan change.

At a minimum, the EAP should include:

- Emergency escape procedures and routes.
- Procedures to account for workers.
- Procedures for workers who remain on site after the alarm sounds.
- Duties for workers designated to perform rescue and medical functions.
- The preferred means for reporting emergencies.
- Contact(s) for further information or explanation of duties under the plan.

- Possible emergency events, incidents and life-threatening situations.
- Emergency escape routes, shelter-in-place locations, and rally points.
- Floor plans and workplace maps.
- A chain of command to prevent confusion and to coordinate the work.
- Emergency communication equipment, such as two-way radios or a public address system for workers and first responder notification.
- Special equipment needed for emergencies and disaster response.
- Workers' next-of-kin emergency phone numbers and contacts.
- Farm inventory that includes location of livestock, electrical shut-off locations, buildings and structures, and farm machinery/equipment makes and model numbers.
- Needed supplies, such as sandbags, fire extinguishers, gas-powered generators and hand tools.
- If needed, location of primary and secondary areas to relocate farm assets and workers.
- Location of buildings in the vicinity that can be used as a command post or logistical assistance area.

The employer should make workers aware of the potential man-made and natural workplace emergency situations that could have an impact on the farm.

Preplanning with First Responders

Implementing and exercising an emergency action plan should involve working with your local first responders or fire department. Invite them to walk your farm to gather and record important information that could be critical for making life-saving decisions at an incident, such as a grain bin entrapment, fire or natural disaster. Pre-planning allows first responders to become familiar with the following:

- Farm's physical layout, including buildings and other structures. (e.g., grain bins)
- Hazardous chemicals (e.g., pesticides, anhydrous ammonia) and equipment (e.g., augers, PTOs).
- Locations where employees would be if an emergency occurred; important contacts, including daytime and nighttime contact information.
- How utilities (e.g., electric, gas and water) can be controlled.
- Evacuation plans, security, etc.
- Emergency first responder limitations.

Training

Worker training may vary from operation to operation. Some employers set up formal classroom-style training for workers and others work one-on-one with workers. If workers are expected to perform adequately in an emergency, provision must be made for the training of both individuals and teams. Regardless of the training approach, worker training is an important part of a good emergency preparedness plan. Training should be conducted periodically or as needed to maintain workplace preparedness. In addition, training and training materials should be provided to workers in a language that they understand, because some workers may not speak English.

Workers should be trained in the following areas:

- Evacuation plans
- Alarm systems
- Reporting procedures for personnel
- Shutdown procedures
- Types of potential emergencies

Farm Exercises and Drills

Unless the plan is tested, it is difficult to predict all of the problems that may happen. Exercises and drills are excellent tools to minimize these potential problems. Nevertheless, exercises and drills should be conducted annually or as needed to practice all or critical portions (such as evacuation) of the emergency response plan.

After each drill, exercise, or emergency incident, a meeting or review should be held to evaluate what happened, why it happened, and how it can be done better by the employer and worker(s) in the future. Furthermore, post exercise and drill meetings or reviews will identify areas that require improvements.

Medical Service and First Aid

At least one person or persons, in the absence of an infirmary, clinic, or hospital in near proximity to the workplace, should be adequately trained to render first aid. It is also essential that basic first-aid supplies are available. Emergency phone numbers should be posted in visible places, inside farm vehicles, and on telephones.

For more information on first aid, see OSHA's *Best Practices Guide: Fundamentals of a Workplace First-Aid Program* at www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3317first-aid.pdf.

Workplace Emergency Response Team

A farm's most valuable asset during the first few minutes of an emergency is a well-trained and disciplined emergency response team. A farm emergency response may be provided by an outside organization, such as the fire department or in some cases, the farm's internal emergency response team. Workers who are members of the emergency response team should be thoroughly trained and physically capable of performing emergency response duties and responsibilities. They should also be knowledgeable about the hazards found on the farm.

Team members should know when to take actions themselves or to wait on outside assistance when an emergency or disaster is too large to handle (i.e., the fire department).

One or more members on the team should be trained in:

- How and when to use various types of fire extinguishers
- First aid, including cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
- Shutdown procedures
- Chemical spill control procedures
- Emergency rescue procedures

Contractors

Employers should alert contractors about the hazards found in the workplace, particularly regarding the work they are to perform. In any emergency situation, contractors should be able to take appropriate action as part of the EAP.



Photo: iStock

Workers' Rights

Workers have the right to:

- Working conditions that do not pose a risk of serious harm.
- Receive information and training (in a language and vocabulary the worker understands) about workplace hazards, methods to prevent them, and the OSHA standards that apply to their workplace. Review records of work-related injuries and illnesses.
- File a complaint asking OSHA to inspect their workplace if they believe there is a serious hazard or that their employer is not following OSHA's rules. OSHA will keep all identities confidential.
- Exercise their rights under the law without retaliation, including reporting an injury or raising health and safety concerns with their employer or OSHA. If a worker has been retaliated against for using their rights, they must file a complaint with OSHA as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days.

For additional information, see [OSHA's Workers page](#).

For questions or to get information or advice, to report an emergency, fatality, inpatient hospitalization, amputation, or loss of an eye, to file a confidential complaint, or to request OSHA's free on-site consultation service, contact your nearest OSHA office, visit www.osha.gov, or call OSHA at 1-800-321-OSHA (6742), TTY 1-877-889-5627.

For more information on ATV safety and other issues affecting farmworkers, visit OSHA's Safety and Health Topics Agricultural Operations website at www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/agriculturaloperations.

For assistance, contact us. We can help. It's confidential.



U.S. Department of Labor

This is one in a series of informational fact sheets highlighting OSHA programs, policies or standards. It does not impose any new compliance requirements. For a comprehensive list of compliance requirements of OSHA standards or regulations, refer to Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations. This information will be made available to sensory-impaired individuals upon request. The voice phone is (202) 693-1999; teletypewriter (TTY) number: (877) 889-5627.

